Lateral

Journal of the Cultural Studies Association

Editors' Introduction

by André m. carrington, Robert F. Carley, Eero Laine, Yumi Pak, SAJ, Alyson K. Spurgas and Chris Alen Sula | Issue 13.1 (Spring 2024)

ABSTRACT This issue of *Lateral* introduces new features and significant original scholarship, including the Feeding the Civic Imagination forum, the debut of Aporias, new additions to Years in Cultural Studies and Positions, three original articles, and several book reviews.

KEYWORDS cultural studies, protest, scholarship

In the spring of 2024, college students across the United States began staging encampments at their universities to draw attention to and protest the imminent genocide in Gaza. What began with a handful of spontaneous demonstrations spread to over a hundred schools all over this country and abroad, at McGill and Concordia, Sciences Po, the Sorbonne, Warwick University, Selçuk University, and the universities of Valencia, Melbourne, Sydney, Tokyo, and Kuwait.[1] The vicissitudes of the actions and their respective demands are heterogeneous; their development and progress has been varied; their strategies have met with mixed circumstances on the ground. When campers have faced mass arrests, white supremacist gangsters,[2] riot police, tear gas, and pepper spray, media coverage decries protests for "turning violent," as if through alchemy. Student-run independent newspapers and radio stations have surpassed both corporate and public media with exceptional journalistic insight into their own communities amid these events.[3] Some student activists, such as those at Evergreen State College,

the University of Minnesota, and the University of California, Riverside, have chosen to wind down or discontinue their actions after negotiating with university administrators.[4] Some administrations have pledged to keep the police at bay, while others have succeeded tragedy with farce by contracting out the written reflection papers they demand from students who allegedly violated their codes of conduct during the protests.[5] None of these outcomes represents a permanent resolution to the role of higher education, as an industry and as a sphere of public thought, in war and famine.

The military onslaught that Israel launched in response to the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, has destroyed every university in Gaza.[6] Like the movement to end apartheid in South Africa in the twentieth century, this wave of campus protests and institutional policy shifts register the deep continuities between power and knowledge. There is another generation of Palestinian students in Diaspora who will seek to understand their place in the world in light of these events. Wherever people are learning and thinking critically about the world around them, struggle ensues.[7]

We continue to think collectively and work together. This issue of *Lateral* introduces new features and significant original scholarship. The Feeding the Civic Imagination forum < https://csalateral.org/archive/forum/feeding-the-civic-imagination/> emerges from the collective responsible for *Popular Culture and the Civic Imagination: Case Studies of Creative Social Change* (2020). As editors Do Own (Donna) Kim, Sangita Shresthova, and Paulina Lanz write, "Our understanding of food as a powerful entry point into the civic imagination is . . . deeply rooted in cultural studies where food is intertwined with issues of privilege, access, representation, language, ethnicity, and the materiality of culture." Like previous forums addressing topics from Universal Basic Income < https://csalateral.org/archive/forum/universal-basic-income/> to the practice of Third Worlding < https://csalateral.org/archive/forum/towards-third-worlding/> ,

this forum's contributors balance considerations of emotion, judgment, political economy, and methods for intellectual practice.

Also new to this issue is Aporias < https://csalateral.org/archive/section/aporias/> , edited by Joshua Falek. This section is devised to address conceptual gaps in cultural studies identified by early career researchers and junior scholars, whose training, lived experiences, and deep immersion in texts bring unique insights to the field. Ryan Carroll writes on the connections between political scholarship and political action < https://csalateral.org/section/aporias/the-future-isnt-now-impossible-action-political-scholarship-carroll/> . Melayna Lamb and Tia Trafford rethink Foucault's notion of "carceral society" and recent calls to defund police < https://csalateral.org/section/aporias/anti-blackness-as-disavowal-condition-foucault-carceral-society-lamb-trafford/> .

Sebastiaan Gorissen returns to the Years in Cultural Studies section with a perspective on 1980 < https://csalateral.org/section/years-in-cultural-studies/1980-neo-marxism-feminism-post-colonialism-gorissen/> , when decolonization, Marxist thought, and feminism turned in new directions to adapt to the changing landscape.

This issue also includes the third episode of Positions < https://csalateral.org/podcasts/positions/the-world-as-abyss/> , with Andrew Culp and Cultural Studies Association's Black and Race Studies Working Group Co-Host Shauna Rigaud discussing *The World as Abyss: The Caribbean and Critical Thought in the Anthropocene* (University of Westminster Press, 2023) with authors Jonathan Pugh and David Chandler, and a scholarly commentary by Richard T. Stafford.

In "Cringe Theory," < https://csalateral.org/issue/13-1/cringe-theory-smilges/> J. Logan Smilges considers the affective and aesthetic contours of cringe and cringing. Beyond a purely physiological response, cringe is fully political—and thus informs how we come to feel normativity and respond to disability. Through

personal narrative and media analysis, Smilges demonstrates how cringe is always relationally and culturally situated. Smilges' work configures cringe not simply through the concept "structure of feeling" but rather recenters feeling through how disability is understood in the contemporary American public imagination and, as a result, transforms how we understand the association between "structures" and "feelings." Their entreatment of feeling through an aesthetic and affective phenomenology of cringing concretizes, elevates, and re-embeds cultural studies' conception of feeling to make an enduring contribution to contemporary theories of cultural studies.

Judy Rohrer's "We Are Not (Yet) Nonbinary" < https://csalateral.org/issue/13-1/we-are-not-yet-nonbinary-rohrer/> explores the generative legacies of queer, crip, and Indigenous analytics, considering lessons for shaping and intervening in the now and in the future. Speaking predominantly to white, temporarily-able-bodied, settler feminists interested in world transformation, she argues for the nonbinary as a collective political horizon rather than an individual identity, its pursuit a freedom *practice* to be built.

Chelsea Xu's "Affective Aesthetics: Mapping Visual Cultural Memories in the 2022 Anti-Zero-COVID Policy Protest in China" < https://csalateral.org/issue/13-1/affective-aesthetics-mapping-visual-cultural-memories-2022-anti-zero-covid-policy-protest-china-xu/> examines the recent "A4 Revolution" or "White Paper Revolution" within the historical lineage of the big character posters of the cultural revolution and other Chinese anti-imperial literature. Xu argues that contemporary modes of protest utilize these visual representations to forge affective bonds and build collective memory. Xu's qualitative analysis demonstrates connections among seemingly disparate moments of protest that, together, constitute an archive of tactics which have been used to combat state censorship and repression—the contemporary iterations of which have been effective primarily because of their ability to invoke the past in order to provide a repertoire of tactics for present-day protest.

Finally, this issue coincides with the launch of the Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism Research Collective (CcRrrC) < https://csalateral.org/ccrrrc> , an open access platform bringing together original analysis and curated resources about race and racism outside of the US. The platform hosts a global network of media makers, scholars, and activists turning to local and regional media and popular culture to identify and dismantle colorism and anti-Black racism. This project builds on the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA) forum < https://csalateral.org/archive/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/> edited by Rayya El Zein in *Lateral* 10.1 and launches with sections focused on the Caribbean < https://csalateral.org/ccrrrc/caribbean> and East Asia < https://csalateral.org/ccrrrc/east-asia/> . CcRrrC is a ResearchAMP < https://researchamp.org/> project funded by SSRC < https://ssrc.org/> .

Notes

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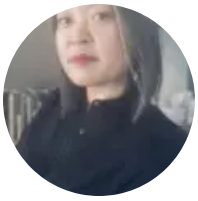

Yumi Pak

Yumi Pak is a student, scholar, and instructor of Black literary and cultural studies, particularly within the overlaps and interstices between the United States, Scotland, and Jamaica. She is currently associate professor of Black Studies and affiliated faculty in English at Occidental College. From 2014–2022, she was assistant/associate professor of English at California State University, San Bernardino, where she also held an appointment as director of Ethnic Studies, a long-standing program on campus; in 2022, she co-founded the Department of Ethnic Studies at CSUSB. Her writing can be found in various publications, including *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, *ASAP/Journal*, *Women, Gender & Families of Color* and *Dismantle Magazine*.

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Article details

andré m. carrington, Robert F. Carley, Eero Laine, Yumi Pak, SAJ, Alyson K. Spurgas, Chris Alen Sula, "Editors' Introduction," *Lateral* 13.1 (2024).

https://doi.org/10.25158/L13.1.1

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Lateral is the peer-reviewed, open access journal of the Cultural Studies Association.

ISSN 2469-4053